

John Catron to Andrew Jackson, March 21, 1835, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

JOHN CATRON TO JACKSON.¹

¹ John Catron was chief justice of Tennessee 1830–1836 and later associate justice of the U. S. Supreme Court.

Nashville, March 21, 1835.

. . . . From Mississippi and Alabama something also has been heard. There if an acceptable candidate for Vice President be put on the ticket of him nominated for President by the Baltimore Convention, I think there can be no doubt even in Alabama but the party will succeed: But Sir here lies the great difficulty. It is asserted by the other side that Col. Johnson is fixed upon already as the man, and so were appearances when I left Washington. Col Johnson² is not only positively unpopular in Tennessee with that class who give tone to a public man, but affirmatively odious. He holds a relation to society such as our old and excellent friend Jenkin Whiteside³ did, who with all his great talents, and thousand virtues, was excluded from it. In every slave holding country this must be so, and ought to be so. The very moment Col. J. is announced, the newspapers will open upon him with facts, that he had endeavoured often to force his daughters into society, that the mother in her life time, and they now, rode in carriages, and claimed equality. The idea of voting for him is loathed beyond anything that has occurred with us, since we have began to act in concert with our sister states on National policy. Then again: Col J. is supposed to have been connected with O.B. Brown of the Post office, to an extent to render him very exceptionable. Third, He wants capacity, a fact generally known, and universally admitted. Furthermore, it is understood that all last summer he was catering with the other side; that

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a long correspondence was had between him and its leader Mr Bell, and if adopted by the Democratic party, it will be *from the fear* he goes over to Mr. Bell's side. You know how grudgingly Southern men act on such motives. Eastern men know nothing of the *West* , compared with men here. The people of New Orleans and St. Louis are next neighbours. We know the characters of men in the Valley of the Mississippi to a minuteness of detail that is surprising. if we desire to know any thing [about] a man in any quarter of the Union, we enquire of our next neighbour, who but the other day lived by him and has emigrated here. Many imagine in the East our plain people are caught by mere names, that any Military character will take. Genl *Gaines* ! Genl Scott, Genl Harrison, have been holden forth for the Presidency! and Col Johnson is presented on the same grounds. It is an utter mistake to suppose capacity and character are not the great requisites with us to obtain political station: Military success has only been taken as *evidence* of fitness, here and the world over, and I pray you to assure our friends that the humblest of us do not believe that a lucky random shot, even if it did hit Tecumseh, qualifies a man for Vice President. We have supported Military men because of superiority in mind, energy and character, not because they stormed the breach. In either House of Congress what strength can Col Johnson's popularity bring? Can a single vote be added by running with his ticket? But it is said the Vice President must come from the West if the President is taken from the East. Grant it in our present attitude: Who is to be the man? There are only two to be thought of by any man who knows the West, Benton (declined) and Carroll⁴ . The latter is the most popular man next to yourself from the Ohio to the Gulf of Mexico. Put Carroll on the regular ticket and Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi, go for him almost without a struggle. In Louisiana I

2 Richard M. Johnson, of Kentucky, Vice-President 1837–1841.

3 U. S. senator from Tennessee 1809–1811.

4 William Carroll, governor of Tennessee 1821–1827, 1829–1835.

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have for many years supposed him the strongest man in the Union, not excepting yourself. The French did not quarrel with him because he did no affirmative acts in reference to them, when the City was besieged, these fell to your lot. Kentucky I do not believe Mr. Van Buren can get under any circumstances, Surely not if Mr. Clay runs, but if Judge White is the Whig candidate there, a great division will go over to Carroll, who is very much stronger than Col Johnson through the Green river country. the putting Carroll up will force Mr Clay and his friends into an attitude, now cautiously evaded, before the August elections, it will totally change the face of things in the West within forty days after the Democratic ticket is formed. The Whigs dare not wait for the people to take sides between Judge White and Govr Carroll. In Pennsylvania Carroll will be very acceptable, pretty much so in Ohio, more than Col Johnson I have very little doubt. In Illinois, partly a colony of our people, irresistible: and so in Missouri, where no additional strength however is wanted.

My dear Sir we must not in this great and I trust final battle against thirty five millions of money, against uncompromising nullification, against a scheme of protection, and of its correlative, waste by internal improvements, think of humouring third rate politicians from a state flatly against us. In all conscience we have been most kind to our next neighbors considering they had so *little* to offer in exchange. . . .